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SUBJECT: SURINAME: CHINESE SUGAR POT FOR GOVERNMENT
COALITION CAUSES MEDIA FLURRY

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The week of March 12, media coverage came fast and furious about the most recent Chinese government sugar pot of financial contributions to some political parties in Suriname's New Front Plus (ruling) Coalition. The media reported three of the New Front Plus Coalition members unashamedly acknowledged receipt of contributions from the Government of China (GOC), while others eschewed the practice. Ironically, in July 2007 the ruling coalition had adamantly protested as dollar diplomacy Taiwan's overtures to Suriname. Apparently, some of the New Front Plus Coalition is less concerned when the political donor is the GOC. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On March 12, a media flurry broke over the Chinese government sugar pot of financial contributions for some political parties in Suriname's New Front Plus (ruling) Coalition. On March 5, former United Party for the Interior (BEP) Treasurer Nagesing Ajeki stated on the news broadcast Suriname Vandaag (Suriname Today) that BEP had dismissed him because he had questioned inappropriate usage of party funds. (Note: BEP is a member of the A-Combination, a coalition of three smaller political parties -- the General Liberation and Development Party (ABOP), Seeka, and BEP, that together form one member of Suriname's ruling coalition. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) On March 10, during an A-Combination meeting, Ronnie Brunswijk, ABOP Chair and A-Combination parliamentarian, raised the issue of these funds coming from a package of gifts from the Government of China (GOC). (Note: The gifts were given to a 12-member BEP delegation that traveled to China from September 3-10, 2007. The media reported that in addition to the all-expense paid trip, BEP party officials received between \$80 and \$125,000 dollars, and several student scholarships to China. End Note.) Brunswijk argued gifts to any A-Combination member should be shared with all members.

¶4. (SBU) BEP chair and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Caprino Alendy reportedly responded that the invitation to visit China, financial gifts, and scholarships were explicitly directed to the BEP Party, and would not be shared. In return, the GOC apparently required BEP to support the One China Policy, according to one media report. Brunswijk, apparently unsatisfied with this response, made a public statement to the media.

¶5. (SBU) In a domino effect, on March 13 and 14, three of four national papers reported on additional GOC financial gifts to other Surinamese political parties. De Ware Tijd (the newspaper of record) quoted the statement of Winston

Jessurun, leader of Democratic 91 (DA91), another New Front Plus Coalition member party, that the GOC had made a generous contribution to the ruling coalition in the aftermath of Suriname's 2005 national election. This donation was distributed amongst the coalition member parties based on a distribution code. Jessurun's statement was echoed by United Reform Party (VHP) First Secretary Mahinder Rathipal, who said China has supported us, and has offered support when necessary, and by Pertjajah Luhur (PL) Vice Chair Ronny Tamsiran, who stated there is nothing wrong when a friendly nation donates money or goods to a political party.

¶6. (SBU) Other coalition members sang a different tune. Surinamese Labor Party (SPA) Secretary for Foreign Relations John Defares said no SPA members had received gifts from the GOC. First Secretary Sunil Oemrawsing of the National Party of Suriname (NPS), the party of President Venetiaan, said media reports were absolutely, absolutely untrue. (Note: The NPS is the party of choice for many Chinese-origin Surinamers, and has a large China lobby within the party. End Note.) In the meantime, representatives of opposition parties Political Wing of the Federation of Agricultural Workers (PVF) and the National Democratic Party (NDP) said neither party had received gifts or trips to China.

¶7. (SBU) Comment. In this media flurry, the tables turned on the GOC. Media coverage in the past has focused on ruling coalition complaints of Taiwan's dollar diplomacy overtures to Suriname, a hot topic in July 2007. Current reporting shows the Surinamese public that, in fact, the New Front Plus Coalition is of two minds on whether it is appropriate for

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political parties to accept sugar pots. Apparently for some in the ruling coalition, dollar diplomacy is defined differently when the donor is the GOC rather than Taiwan.

End Comment.

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